

activities to charming venues, this little town on the banks of the St. Croix River has a lot to offer, especially for out-of-town guests. “We chose Stillwater because we knew we’d have people coming for the whole weekend,” says bride Ashley Kapsner of Burnsville. “It was such a nice getaway for those who wanted to make a weekend of it. People were really excited.”

To help guests make the most of their time, Trotter recommends providing a list of activities or favorite locations of the bride and groom. “Couples choosing Stillwater for

a wedding typically have a history with the town—fun dates they’ve had or things they love about the area,” says Trotter. If you’re new to the area, build in time to explore some of Stillwater’s best offerings during event planning trips or meetings with vendors.

A must for any Stillwater visitor is a narrated tour aboard the Stillwater Trolleys. The trolleys tour the historic highlights of the area and can be rented for a unique way to transport the wedding party or guests on the big weekend.

For a true taste of Stillwater, take a tour and sample the craft beer flavors of Lift

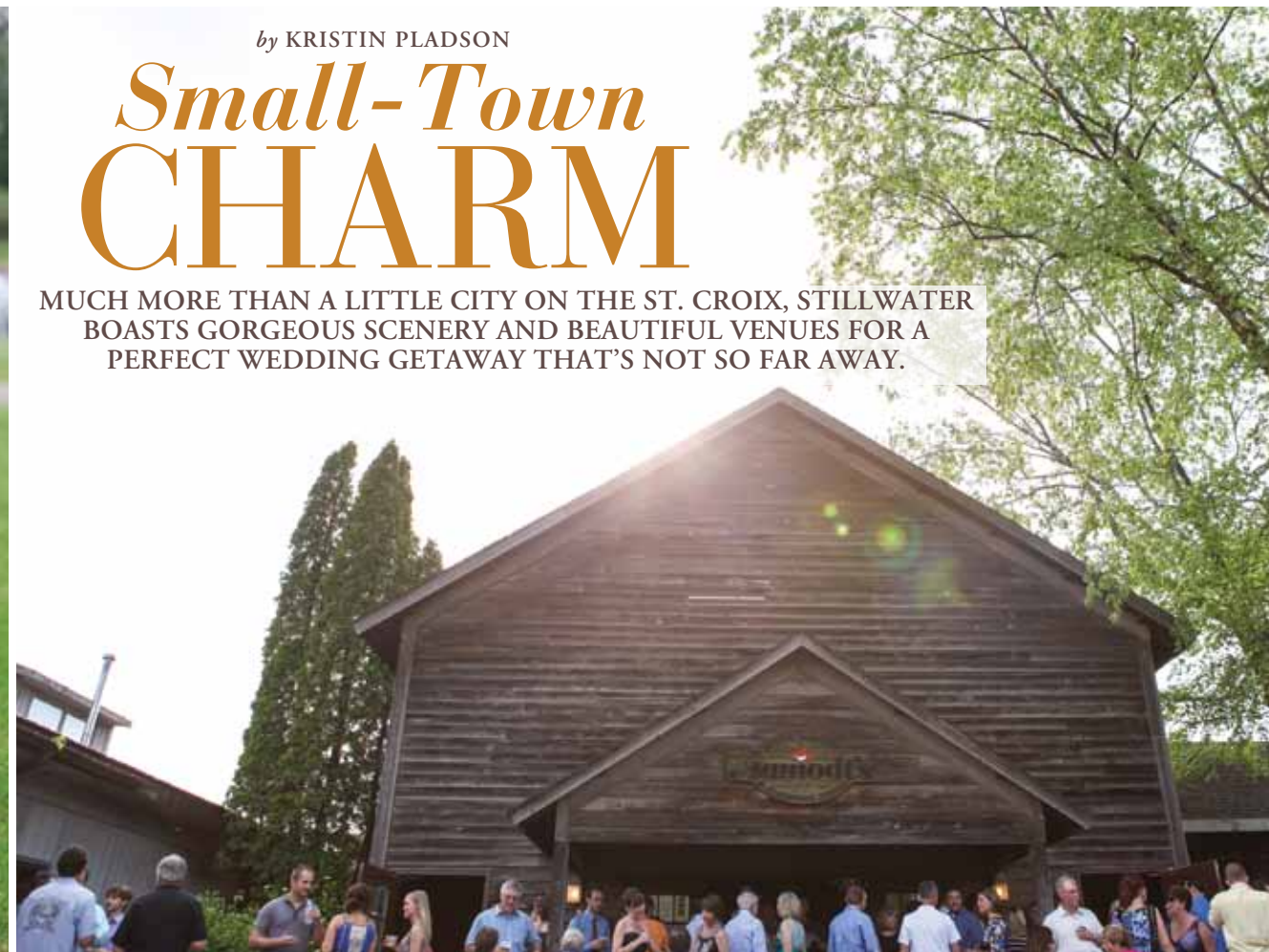
Bridge Brewery, do a wine tasting at St. Croix Vineyards or step back into the 1800s with a tour of the Joseph Wolf Brewery Caves and a hosted wine tasting by Luna Rossa restaurant.

For riverside dining, live music or a pre-wedding night on the town, check out the Freight House. If your guests’ tastes run a bit more rustic, step into Smalley’s Caribbean BBQ and Pirate Bar (which catered the Prokosches’ reception) for an unforgettable barbecue. Top it off with a scoop of ice cream big enough to bring on brain freeze from local favorite Nelson’s Ice Cream.

by KRISTIN PLADSON

Small-Town CHARM

MUCH MORE THAN A LITTLE CITY ON THE ST. CROIX, STILLWATER BOASTS GORGEOUS SCENERY AND BEAUTIFUL VENUES FOR A PERFECT WEDDING GETAWAY THAT’S NOT SO FAR AWAY.



{facing pages}
Stunning orchards, gorgeous ceremony and reception spaces and even some friendly goats helped Abby and Travis Prokosch to say “yes” to Aamodt’s Apple Farm in Stillwater. They sprinkled their sunny celebration with local details like apple bars and ice cream direct from the farm.



Once upon a time, a destination wedding required remote planning, hefty airfare and a limited guest list. No more. Twenty miles northeast of St. Paul, historic Stillwater is attracting couples looking for a unique getaway brimming with riverside charm and picturesque venues.

“Stillwater is a fantastic mini-destination wedding spot for couples who want a fun, unique weekend celebration without making people travel too far,” says Sarah Trotter, bridal consultant and owner of Lasting Impressions Weddings in Minnetonka. “It’s a little more laid-back, a little less cookie-cutter and

offers a lot of fun ways to embrace the beauty and character of the area in the details of the event.”

For newlyweds Abby and Travis Prokosch of Lake Elmo, who married at Aamodt’s Apple Farm, local details were exactly what they wanted in their one-of-a-kind event. “Every vendor we used was from the area,”

says Abby, “down to the apple bars and ice cream provided by Aamodt’s instead of wedding cake. There were just so many options here for something different, something other than a limo and big hotel.”

SO MUCH TO EXPLORE
From only-in-Stillwater shops and

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*{facing pages}
Melanie and David
Watson chose one of
Stillwater's most popular
venues, Camrose Hill
Farm, to host their chic
summer wedding. The
couple incorporated
rustic-glam accents into
their décor to reflect
the beauty of the
sprawling grounds, and
lit sparklers under the
stars to end the night on
a dazzling note.*



KICKING OFF THE CELEBRATION

Chances are good that your wedding will have a rehearsal dinner. In Stillwater, that's a great way to experience more of the area's premier venues. Take guests for a slow cruise on one of the St. Croix Boat and Packet Company's beautiful paddleboats. With boats that can accommodate groups of 25 to 675 guests, these charters are a great option for modest rehearsals or grand-scale receptions.

For landlubbers, downtown Stillwater's Luna Rossa restaurant offers an intimate rehearsal or

reception atmosphere nestled within the historic caves. "It was so private, so romantic," says Ashley of her Luna Rossa reception, which featured the restaurant's Italian cuisine. "The food was fantastic and I'm sure we'll be coming back for many anniversaries."

If two days of Stillwater-based wedding festivities aren't enough, think about shifting your schedule. "There's a big trend with Thursday rehearsals," says Trotter. "This opens up a lot of time so the wedding party can all do something fun on Friday."

In the warm months, Trotter suggests treating the wedding party to a Friday on the water with a boat rental from Stillwater Boat Club. Or send the groom and his men off to one of the area's 20 golf courses while the bride and her maids get pretty with Just for Me Spa's pedi party package.

THINK OUTSIDE THE CHAPEL

Stillwater may not be home to the white sands of tropical destination weddings but this river valley boasts plenty of vow-worthy venues.

Among the most coveted sites is the 1880s Camrose Hill Farm. "Couples who want a fun outdoor ceremony will love this location," says Trotter. "The lawns and flower beds are stunning. It's really a beautiful setting for a private, rustic, relaxed event." And relaxed is the name of the game here. While the wedding party gets ready in a quaint 1950s cottage, guests can play

yard games and wander the sprawling, manicured grounds before moving into the pavilion for an open-air reception to remember.

For Ashley and her husband Matt, Trellis was the perfect location for their June 2012 outdoor nuptials. "The landscaping on the property is exquisite and every detail was perfect," says Ashley. Those details include limestone paths, softly trickling fountains, a covered ceremony area (a gazebo is available for smaller events), guest cottage for getting ready and day-of coordination.

Other picturesque venues include the Stillwater Library rooftop, an outdoor ceremony and reception space with spectacular views of the river and the historic Stillwater skyline; Aamodt's Apple Farm, with three unforgettable ceremony settings scattered throughout the orchard grounds; and local winery St. Croix Vineyards, which sits right next door.

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